

dark troubadour

number one autumn 1994

\$2.50



this issue...

Karl Edward Wagner

Fairport Convention

October Project

HYPNOS ep Cassette DREAMS FOR SLEEPWALKERS

Hypnos was the ancient Greek personification of Sleep, twin brother to THANATOS (Death) and father of MORPHEUS (Dreams).

In this collection, "Dreams For Sleepwalkers" Marie Alexander, former vocalist of Hector in Paris, Oracle, Loch Gill and Revelations In Black, joins Chuck Owston of Revelations In Black on keyboards, cittern, mandola and vocals.



DREAMS FOR SLEEPWALKERS

A COLLECTION OF VAMPIRE SONGS

This cassette features 8 songs; five are originals, one is a collaboration written to a poem from 1895 by Robert W. Chambers in The King In Yellow, one is traditional, and another is an atmospheric rendering of King Crimson's "Epitaph." Haunting vocals blend with etheric Gothic instrumental passages.

All tapes postpaid \$7.00 from: Chuck Owston
P.O. Box 162
Ardara, PA 15615

Ruby Tears * She Walks The Night *
Dead Roses * Carcosa * Epitaph *
She Moves Through The Fair * Our
Lady of Darkness ** Aetheria 004

WELCOME!

dark troubadour is a new fanzine of music and literature for the Traveller in Shadows. The musical direction is that of Medieval/Ethereal/Gothic, while the literature is that of Horror and the Supernatural. This first issue features an interview with Karl Edward Wagner, editor of The Year's Best Horror Stories and creator of Kane, the accursed sorcerer/warrior. Also featured are Fairport Convention and October Project.

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Sheila Owston - Typing and Layout	

KARL EDWARD WAGNER INTERVIEW

Karl Edward Wagner is a horror/fantasy writer who lives in Chapel Hill, NC. He is the author of several collections of finely wrought short stories in the horror genre. His epics about Kane, a sorcerer/adventurer/warrior, are unique in the field, transcending the predictable plots and cardboard characters of most "sword and sorcery" (a term Wagner deplors). Six unique books contain the Kane saga to date: DEATH ANGEL'S SHADOW, DARK CRUSADE, BLOODSTONE, DARKNESS WEAVES, NIGHT WINDS, and THE BOOK OF KANE. Any fan of dark fantasy will find them a pleasure to read. Several times.

Two novels, THE ROAD OF KINGS and LEGION OF THE SHADOWS, continue the stories of characters created by Robert E. Howard. There are two collections of Karl's short stories, WHY NOT YOU AND I? and IN A LONELY PLACE. He collaborated on a novel with David Drake. It was set in ancient Rome and called KILLER.

Karl won the British Fantasy Award for STICKS, TWO SUNS SETTING, NEITHER BRUTE NOR HUMAN, and also a life achievement award. He won World Fantasy Awards for his publishing house, Carcosa, and for BEYOND ANY MEASURE.

He is also an editor. In the late 70's, he edited a new edition of the Conan of Cimmeria stories of Robert E. Howard in their original form. This was a great service to those of us who wanted to read what Howard actually wrote, rather than the "edited" versions served up by well-meaning, but misguided souls.

Karl also edited a series called ECHOES OF VALOR for Tor Books. It contains fantasy stories long out of print. Karl has rescued great tales like SHADOW OF THE VULTURE (probably the best thing Howard ever wrote) from the dustbin of obscurity.

Karl also edits THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR STORIES for DAW Books. These collections give us the best (not necessarily the best

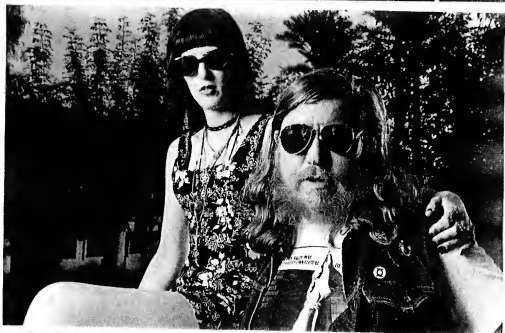
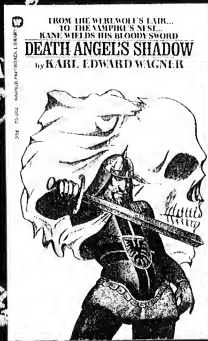


Photo of Karl Wagner (right) and Salamander
by Beth Gwinn, Nashville, Tennessee.





THE DEATH OF ABEL

known) stories in the genre. Quality always supersedes Big Names.

Karl's work regularly appears in anthologies of macabre tales. A true renaissance man, he is also a small press publisher. He has brought out several notable collections of tales under his own Carcosa imprint. Thanks to Karl, we have the works of Manly Wade Wellman and others in deluxe hardcover editions.

Karl looks like a character out of his one of his own books. Imagine him in iron helmet and breastplate, a long sword strapped across his back, with a mead cup in his hand. He stands at the rail of a dragon ship, his long red hair and beard blowing in the salt spray, his eyes searching for new lands to plunder.

Q: Who were your earliest influences in the horror/fantasy field?

KEW: My earliest influences were the pre-Code horror comics of the early 1950's, from which I learned to read. In first grade I was drawing and writing some of my own. About this time, I began to read books of mythology and the Grimm Brothers fairy tales.

Q: How and when did you come up with the character Kane? How much is he based on the Biblical Cain?

KEW: I first began to write about Kane in 1960 as a freshman in high school, starting with BLOODSTONE, which I finished ten years later. At age 16, I completed a Kane novella THE TREASURE OF LYNORTIS, later rewritten as LYNORTIS REPRISE. The original version has been published in Italian and German small press magazines. I hope no one over here reads it -- but not bad for a 16 year old punk.

Kane derived from my identification with the villain in books and films. I decided Cain deserved to have his story told, treating the Bible as bronze age myths from earlier ages. I changed the spelling to "Kane" to avoid images of Biblical shepherds wandering about spouting King James English.

Major influences upon Kane's character include: Captain Nemo, Caine Miro (from Roger Corman's film GUNSLINGER), Dr. Frankenstein, and Melmoth the Wanderer from Maturin's novel of the same title.

Q: What was your source for "The Mark of Kane", that being his "killer's blue eyes"?

KEW: According to the legends, Cain had blue eyes, red hair, and was left handed. All of this would have branded him an outsider in Semitic myth. Check out the Who's song "Behind Blue Eyes" on their WHO'S NEXT album.

Q: How did the idea for Carcosa come about, and how did you choose "Carcosa" for your imprint?

KEW: After I dropped out of medical school for a few years, I wanted to start my own small press. Robert W. Chambers has probably been the most profound influence upon my work, and I liked the idea of using his mythical city of Carcosa as my colophon. I obtained permission to revive the colophon from the four partners in the original LA- based Carcosa Press. August Derleth had just died and it appeared that Arkham House was dead as well, so I arranged to publish an orphaned book by my friend, Manly Wade Wellman, entitled WORSE THINGS WAITING, which Arkham had been holding on the back burner for twenty years after Wellman and Derleth quarreled. My partners in Carcosa were fellow writer David Drake and med school classmate Jim Groce. We produced a much larger and far more elaborate version of the book than the one Arkham had buried.

Q: Several of the Carcosa books command collector's prices. Are there any still in print?

KEW: All Carcosa books are out of print. Carcosa published only four books, the last a dozen years ago. I may revive Carcosa some day, but the work involved cut years from my writing career.

Q: Several years back, you did a Conan book for Bantam. How did this come about?

KEW: I was asked by the Good Guys to write three Conan novels to save the series from the crap being written by the Bad Guys. The problem was that Bantam wanted the first novel delivered in one month. I took one year. Meanwhile, Conan Properties had taken control of Conan the Property: I lost artistic control, and I had made certain enemies on the board. After one novel, I bailed out.

Q: In *THE RIVER OF NIGHT'S DREAMING* you make references to *THE KING IN YELLOW*. How much did this classic influence you?

KEW: Much of my work has resonances of Robert W. Chambers. While almost all of his books were hack-work romances, the best of his supernatural horror can stand with the very best. The primary lesson I've learned from reading Chambers was to create a deliberate barrier against final comprehension -- thus creating the lost uncertainty of an extended nightmare.

Q: Your story *STICKS* won a British fantasy award. Would you class it as a Cthulhu Mythos story and how did this story come about?

KEW: *STICKS* was also a runner up for the World Fantasy award. It has been classed as a Cthulhu Mythos story by numerous editors and fans, and I suppose it is. The story was written for a special issue of *WHISPERS* published as a tribute to artist Lee Brown Coye. I was using Coye as an artist for *Carcosa* and had asked him about the sticks he insisted on inserting all about his drawings. Coye gave me the story -- virtually true up to the point that the desiccated corpse grabs his hand in the abandoned house, whereupon I took over. Coye had written of his experience in his column for the local newspaper. August Derleth, using Coye at Arkham House, had earlier asked Lee about the sticks. Lee told him the same story; Derleth meant to write it into a Lovecraft pastiche, but died before he could do so. I wrote *STICKS* as a friendly tribute to Lee, never expecting it to be read beyond a few hundred *WHISPERS* subscribers. It's far and away the most published and popular story I've ever written.

Q: *AT FIRST JUST GHOSTLY* is one of my favorite stories, placing Kane in post-punk London. Do you plan to expand it into a novel, and if so, when?

KEW: *AT FIRST JUST GHOSTLY* is the opening segment of a novel by that title. Other segments are: *LACUNAE* and *LATE AT NIGHT IN THE DEPTHS OF THE ACME WAREHOUSE*, although these may be used elsewhere as entries in a short story collection. I hope to complete the novel while in London this autumn.

Q: The mysterious Lady in Black from *AT FIRST JUST GHOSTLY*

seems to have been seen in your company at recent conventions. Any words to share with our readers on her identity?

KEW: The original Lady in Black crept into my hotel suite at the Metropole in Brighton at the World SF Con in 1987. The door to my saloon wouldn't catch-- a fact well known to hotel thieves and to the hotel management, who were taking a cut. She was the second hotel thief to barge in: the other dressed as a toff with briefcase barged in while friends and I were quietly drinking. This one pushed in as I was on the phone, only a minute or so from taking a shower. I was still dressed, having not slept; she was dressed all in black from cap to shoes. I used her for AT FIRST JUST GHOSTLY as described. She wandered about my bar. I hung up and asked if I might help her. She kept wandering, casing the suite. I don't look much like a person who rents suites at the Metropole, and I think she thought I was just another hotel thief. After a short discussion, I told her I'd strangle her if she didn't push off. She did. Hotel security calmly said that she was a well known looney. After some phone calls, they secured my door. They did not charge me for my bar bill, which was a fair bribe.

The newly discovered Lady in Black is Lynn Gauger from Chicago (she likes to be called "Salamander"), whom I met at the Minneapolis World Fantasy Convention. She is a petite punker model and into gothic rock, THE KING IN YELLOW, and my writing. She also draws, and writes poetry. She is also not from this planet. We get along quite well, once medications are adjusted and the chains are secure.

Q: The character (a Dark Troubadour if there ever was one) in DID THEY GET YOU TO TRADE? seems based on Mick Fleetwood's description of Peter Green, the founder of Fleetwood Mac. Would you care to elaborate?

KEW: I do not know, nor have I ever met anyone named Peter Green, nor have I ever heard of a band called Fleetwood Mac. DID THEY GET YOU TO TRADE? is simply a story about an alienated rock star. Also, it's set in post-punk London. Could have happened in any pub.

Q: For our Stateside readers, what actually is a "blowlamp"?

KEW: "Blowlamp" is cockney rhyming slang for tramp. Another example is bin-lid for quid (an English pound monetary unit). Dunno

where "quid" came from. Wine is too expensive for blowlamps, so they take strong cider, strong lager (Tennent's Super – can kill at fifty feet), or hit methyalted spirit at the end. Thus, lager lads instead of winos.

Q: What is the source of your fascination with the Church of St. George the Martyr?

KEW: The church is adjacent to my usual hotel in London-- the old Grand Hotel, now upscaled as the Bloomsbury Park Hotel-- on Southampton Row. The church was a Queen Anne construction of about 1703 (date depends on inception and completion of construction), shown in early prints of Queen Square (Square named for Queen Charlotte, George III's consort). Neat. Brick with a small steeple like Shaker Heights Colonial. The third incumbent was The Rev. William Stukeley, M.D. (1747-1765), best remembered as the man who reintroduced a form of Druidism to England. Starting about 1867, the notorious S.S. Teulon remodeled the church to some sort of Byzantine structure, placing stucco over the original brick, replacing the bell-turret with a grotesque metallic spirelet, and reorienting the altar from facing east (into the Square) to facing south (into a wall opposite). Windows were replaced, but blown out during the Blitz. Parts were salvaged and used for the upstairs Peter's Bar (now a conference room; windows not to be found) at the Bloomsbury Park Hotel. Years ago I noticed that these windows had numerous cabalistic and black magic symbols. This started my interest and subsequent research. Queen Square has tunnels beneath it, one leading from a pub, The Queen's Larder. The old gent who was going to show the entrance to me had vanished shortly after telling me this. Across the Square is Lamb Conduit Street, once known as Devil's Conduit, dating to a conduit built in the reign of Richard II. My current best guess is that the area was a temple for The Order of the Golden Dawn, although I have a feel that Satanism (not witchcraft) may be the force involved.

Q: You mentioned a "horned god" stained glass window in London. Where was this?

KEW: When the Grand Hotel was being upscaled, they moved the front desk toward the back of the foyer. In renovating to Art Deco style, they removed plaster from a covered pair of stained glass windows above the

stairway leading to the downstairs bar. One window is of the great seal of England, the other is a demonic parody, with two demons and a horned god and the motto, "Que Sara Sara". The address of the manufacturer is only a few doors away, but no longer present. I learned that addresses were changed after WW II and that the glass had likely been created on these premises, since the hotel only opened after WW II, before which it had been a manufacturing area. The Bloomsbury Park Hotel (as it is now named) is adjacent to the Church of St. George the Martyr. Didn't know he was a martyr.

Q: How long have you been editing THE YEAR'S BEST HORROR?

KEW: Fifteen years now.

Q: Whatever happened to CONAN III, the movie? I understand that you were writing the screenplay. And what were your impressions of the other two Conan movies?

KEW: I wrote three different screenplays for CONAN III for Dino, which is all the Writer's Guild requires on a contract-- screenplay and two revisions, then more money. Original version was to be shot in China on a twenty million buck budget. Then DUNE came out and flopped. Second version was to be shot in Tunis for about half the first budget. Then DUNE really flopped. Third version was to be shot in North Carolina on a very small budget. Then DUNE awesomely flopped. Dino decided he'd better cut his losses.

The other two Conan movies sucked.

Q: What's the status of the ECHOES OF VALOR series? The last one I have is number three, published in 1991.

KEW: ECHOES OF VALOR is dead as a series due to no promotion and poor sales. No one cared about reading old stories.

Q: In how many countries have your books been published?

KEW: I'm not sure. About a dozen that I know of.

Q: Would you care to talk a little about the DC Comics fiasco?

KEW: I'd rather have an asbestos enema that work with DC again. I was paid fifteen thou to write TELL ME, DARK for DC, with Kent

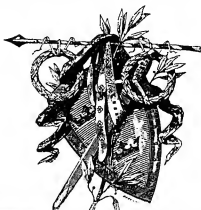
Williams to paint (not draw) the eighty page hard cover. Script was given the okay, checks all cleared the bank. Meanwhile, the Big Editor, Karen Berger, was away on extended maternity leave. Kent ignored my script-- like leaving out three of the eight chapters-- and never got into the feel of what I wanted done. He wanted creative input, and he wouldn't change a brushstroke of the crap he added. Karen came back to work after the book had been done. I worked a wasted year, trying to revise the script for an editor who is brain- dead and an artist who reads with his lips moving. Karen hated everything I did: Kent wouldn't budge. I wanted to take the book elsewhere. I got fired via a FedEx Saturday morning delivery letter, just to make my day. I offered to help with the rewrite. They hired my best friend, John Rieber, to do the rewrite. For three thou he sold me out. Graciously, they gave me minor partial credit for two wasted years' work. I refuse to look at the plagiarism. We don't party much together anymore.

Q: Have you ever regretted leaving the world of psychiatry for the world of literary fame?

KEW: Hell, no.

Q: What do you see on the agenda for the next few years from the Wagner pen?

KEW: Projects in the works include a third collection of contemporary horror stories, EXORCISMS AND ECSTASIES; a medical thriller, THE FOURTH SEAL; a Kane novel, AT FIRST JUST GHOSTLY; a deranged Western novel, SATAN'S GUN; and the novel version of TELL ME, DARK. After that, I plan to do more Kane novels, move into the mainstream, and buy a decent Fender Stratocaster.



OCTOBER PROJECT - in concert -

Rosebud, Pittsburgh

Thurs. Apr. 21st, 1994.

This was one of the finest concerts this writer has attended in many moons. The October Project defies description. Comparisons to other bands are sorely inadequate. Their sound is highly original. I've heard them called folk-rock, gentle gothic, and even ethereal.

Lead vocalist Mary Fahr and harmony vocalist/synthesizer player Marina Belica, both clothed in black, wove a haunting, many-colored tapestry of sound, underscored by tasteful acoustic and electric guitars, an additional keyboard, and dynamic percussion. The concert featured the tunes from their first Epic CD, plus several new songs. I was first grabbed by the band's sound when I heard "Bury My Lovely" on WYEP... the live version was even more energetic. My particular favorite on the CD is "Ariel". It was also one of the many high points of a fine show.

October Project submitted a song for the soundtrack of INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE. Mary explained that it was rejected "probably by the same person who cast Tom Cruise in the role of Lestat". To me, the song seemed the perfect choice. Other high points included: "Eyes of Mercy", dedicated to the children of war-torn Bosnia; "Now I Lay Me Down" and a new song, "Funeral In Your Eyes".

After the show (thanks to Sean Butler of Eide's) I had the opportunity to meet the band. I was pleasantly surprised to find none of the snobbishness usually affected by rock stars. October Project is made up of people, not egotistical attitudes masquerading as "artists". I even had the chance to meet several of their relatives who had come from New York for this concert.

I talked with Mary for awhile and discovered that she also grew up on those great folk-rock albums by Fairport Convention, Sandy Denny, June Tabor, Steeleye Span, and Richard and Linda Thompson.

October Project currently have a video out on VH-1, and they announced they were getting ready to shoot their second one. Hopefully, it'll get a little more exposure... could it be too much to expect MTV to put it on 120 Minutes or Alternative Nation? Maybe it is... after all, October Project has true talent... something too many bands on the above mentioned shows lack.

Chuck Owston



FAIRPORT CONVENTION: 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT Woodworm Double CD

Way back in 1969, in the midst of the Psychedelic years, (before many of you blokes out there were born), I chanced upon the magical music of Fairport Convention. Thanks to an article in a magazine with the unlikely title of Hit Parader, I discovered this group that mixed the traditional music of England with rock instruments and techniques. After reading a favorable review of their first US release on A&M, I rushed out and bought it. It proved to be a treasure trove - from the vocals of Sandy Denny and Ian (now Iain) Matthews, the string-bending, searing guitar of Richard Thompson to the rock steady bass of Ashley Hutchings, rhythm guitar of Simon Nicol and drumming of the late Martin Lamble. There were great songs - "Fotheringay" and "She Moves Through The Fair" from the Medieval tradition - as well as modern offerings like Hutchings' blues-rock "Mr. Lacey" and Thompson's "Meet On The Ledge".

I was on my way to being a Fairport fanatic.

I still am.

In 1991 I had the pleasure of meeting my favorite band at the Hearth in Pipersville, PA. After the show I joined a group of fellow Pittsburghers and hung out till the wee hours with these legendary folk-rockers.

The current lineup is: Simon Nicol, vocals, guitar; Dave Pegg, bass, vocals, mandolin; DM (Dave Mattacks), drums, keyboards; Martin Allcock, guitar, vocals, keyboards, bouzar; Ric Sanders, violin, keyboards.

Every year at Cropredy, a lovely village in Oxfordshire, England, thousands of folk-rock fans descend for the Fairport Annual Reunion. This is a massive undertaking. In 1992, I had the opportunity to attend the Cropredy Festival. A Thames Valley

bobby estimated the crowd at 25,000. It was like being at a mini-Woodstock.

Now, for those of you who couldn't attend, you can get the next best thing - a double CD set, "Fairport Convention: 25th Anniversary Concert". Recorded those two nights in August - the 14th and 15th of August, 1992, the boys, along with scads of alumni and friends run through a quarter of a century of excellent music. Those friends include Vikki Clayton, Julianne Regan of All About Eve, Ralph McTell, and even Robert Plant! Yes, the guy who sang "Stairway to Heaven" with Led Zeppelin. One of the high points of the Friday night concert was a reunion of the Full House lineup from the early 70's, featuring Richard Thompson and Dave Swarbrick. "Sloth" literally burns out of the speakers - twelve minutes of blistering guitar work from Mr. Thompson.

Also, on Friday night, Ashley Hutchings and Vikki Clayton joined to take us back to the days of "Liege and Lief", that masterpiece of Medieval folk-rock. During "Tam Lin", the full moon rose above the Oxfordshire hills, and long-haired folks danced to the fiddle and drum - you could have been at a Druid festival 2,000 years ago as painted Celtic tribesmen called up the spirits of the earth.

Due to an unfortunate accident involving a plate glass window, Ric Sanders, Fairport's excellent violinist, appears only on keyboards. Chris Leslie from Whippersnapper took bow in hand and rose to the occasion.

This collection is light on the instrumental jigs and reels and heavy on the vocal pieces, particularly the ones that tell stories: "Claudy Banks", "Close To The Wind", "Poor Will And The Jolly Hangman", "John Barleycorn", "Red and Gold" (about the Battle of Cropredy, fought at the village bridge in 1644), "The Hiring Fair", "Polly On The Shore", and of course, the old standby "Matty Groves".



If you haven't discovered Fairport Convention, this is a good place to begin. If you're already a fan, this is the icing on the cake of your collection.

Available in Pittsburgh at Paul's CD's.

Thanks to Paul for getting them in for us - thanks again to Dave Pegg for everything. When I talked to him at Cropredy, Dave said there were no plans at that time to release this material. I tried to record it myself, but a faulty tape recorder frustrated these efforts. I even tried to get a lady from England who was going to Cropredy last year to find the bloke from Somerset who had also recorded the 25th. All to no avail. Obviously he didn't make it to the 26th.

Then the word came that Woodworm was releasing it after all. Thanks again, Peggy!





Phil and John -- Carnival of Clowns

In my opinion, this was one of the best releases of last year, but it was largely overlooked. This was undoubtedly because it was released on a small "Christian" label, and did not get wide distribution outside of the Christian market. I have seen it, however, in the folk section at Camelot Music Stores. The point is that it's worth seeking out.

Musically, Carnival of Clowns is in the vein of a folksy Prefab Sprout or a Simon and Garfunkel for the 90's. Very well-written, well-arranged songs with great hooks and excellent harmonies. The musicianship is extremely good as well, as is the production. It's very lush sounding, with lots of layers, but without the overly polished gloss of a pop album. The production is reminiscent of the last couple Clannad albums, especially their latest, Banba. Several of the songs have slight Christian content, but not more so than some of Van Morrison's or Bruce Cockburn's. It's not in any way a preachy album, which is good, because I dislike preachy music of any stripe.

In any event, dig up or hunt down a copy of Carnival of Clowns -- you'll find it well worth the couple extra phone calls you may have to make to get hold of it. As I said, this is one of the best releases of last year; in fact, the second "side" of the album is as good a set of five songs as I've heard -- ever. And to top it all off, it's got a great cover. All in all an excellent package the whole way around.

Rob Grano

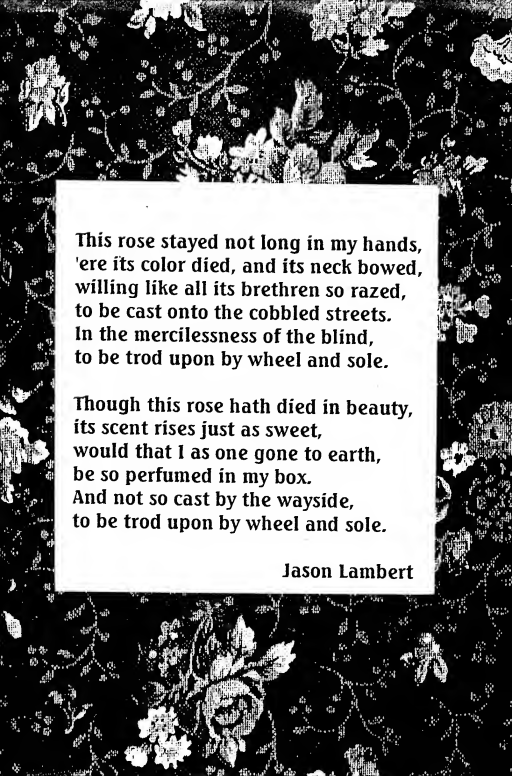
Heidi Berry / HEIDI BERRY 4AD

Dave Swarbrick, in the Fairport Convention video, says that he hasn't heard anyone sing like Sandy Denny since she died. I had to agree with him until I heard Heidi Berry. Her strong vocalizing and melancholy songwriting help to fill the void left by Sandy's departure.

In typical 4AD style, there is an obscure photo of a Venus Fly Trap on the cover, which tells us absolutely nothing about the music within. This album is flawless from start to finish.

There is a brooding gothic quality to the opening song "Mercury", which takes place in a graveyard. I recently heard this song performed by Heidi and a small acoustic group on the World Cafe radio program. The CD version is more textured, but the main feature of both is Heidi's incredible voice. It's also one of those songs I find myself humming while riding in the car (the true sign of a memorable song). Heidi wrote or co-wrote all of the tunes but one. She said in the radio interview that she likes to include one cover tune on each recording. This time around it's Anna McGarrigle's "Heart Like A Wheel". It was an excellent choice. This CD is her first US release, she's had several others before this released in the UK. Many of these songs transcend description or category. This recording contains shimmering guitars, sad cellos, and most of all, Heidi Berry's voice.

Chuck Owston



This rose stayed not long in my hands,
'ere its color died, and its neck bowed,
willing like all its brethren so razed,
to be cast onto the cobbled streets.
In the mercilessness of the blind,
to be trod upon by wheel and sole.

Though this rose hath died in beauty,
its scent rises just as sweet,
would that I as one gone to earth,
be so perfumed in my box.
And not so cast by the wayside,
to be trod upon by wheel and sole.

Jason Lambert



3rd Nail zine

Wherein you, the benighted reader may, for the paltry sum of \$2.50, be entertained by interviews with local Gothic and Industrial bands, music and book reviews, poetry of a darker hue, esoteric examples of the photographic and fine arts, as well articles on everything "Gothic", from the mundane to the exotic. (submissions are always welcome).

You may seek your very own copy at Aziz, Randys Alternatives, Eides, and Slacker.

Upcoming issues are to feature a letters page, classifieds, short stories, and more interviews.

Issues 1, 2, and 3 are available



3rd Nail
1200 Sarah St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15203



"Noctum Invictus"

Connie Dover -- The Wishing Well

The latest release by the lead vocalist of Scartaglen is a very good one. Dover's voice is excellent and the musicians on this album include Phil Cunningham, who also produced, Manus Lunny, Aly Bain, and Brian McNeill, formerly of the Battlefield Band. The album has a sound that is both traditional and contemporary at the same time, as is usually the case with projects that Phil Cunningham and Manus Lunny are involved with. It would definitely fall into the "Celtic" category, but Dover does a very nice, contemporized version of a Gregorian chant, and an excellent version of Huw Williams' "The Summer Before The War". The only misfires are on the two cowboy songs that Dover performs. It's not because the songs themselves aren't good -- I think an album of cowboy songs by Connie Dover would be a great idea. It's just that they don't fit real well with the rest of the material on this record. Over all though, The Wishing Well is a very good release, and all lovers of Celtic and traditional music will enjoy it thoroughly.

Rob Grano

The Trees -- THE GARDEN OF JANE DELAWNEY BGO Records

One of those U.K. groups that took their inspiration from folk rock pioneers Fairport Convention, The Trees appear on CD over twenty after these tunes were recorded. They stand the test of time well, and there are some real moments here, especially the title song. It's a mysterious tale of betrayal and murder that haunts the listener long after the album ends. All About Eve covered this song in the eighties. Other well known songs include the traditional "Jack Orion" and "She Moves Through the Fair", which were recorded by just about everyone. "Lady Margaret" reminds one of "Matty Groves", sharing several of the same verses, but it's a ghostly tale this time around. The lead guitarist was definitely influenced by that sly string-bender, Richard Thompson. A great addition to your collection of seventies English folk rock... can you ever get enough of this stuff?

angelic voices

by Chuck Owston

"So what musical project are you into this week?" asked Mark, stirring brown sugar into his mocha. He was dressed all in black, his bare arms covered with tattoos. His dyed black hair hung to his shoulders. Across the table sat an intense young man in worn flannel shirt and torn jeans. The two were the only patrons of the Beehive at this midmorning hour. The purple-haired girl behind the counter ignored them, gazing out the front window at the autumn rain and the pedestrians running for cover.

"I just got this out of the library this morning," Rick Kelly said, handing over a few photocopies.

Mark scanned the sheets. They were covered with musical notation. The title of the piece was in Latin. He shrugged and asked, "So what's this? Looks like some medieval thing. Obviously I can't read either Latin or sheet music. So you tell me. A little out of your realm, I'd guess. What happened to alternative music?"

"This *is* alternative. It's about as alternative as you can get. It's from the eleventh century..." Rick said.

"Oh, so you've been listening to Dead Can Dance? I get it, you're trying to cash in on the Next Big Thing. Like those monks in Spain did?"

"Those monks in Spain weren't trying to cash in..." Rick protested.

"So what *it this*?" Mark asked again, pointing to the title.

"It's called *The Summoning of Angels*," said Rick.

"Oh, I get it. You're trying to cash in on both hot new trends, angels and Gregorian chants."

"No, that's not it." Rick shook his head in frustration. Obviously Mark had a one track mind. Music to him meant "making it", signing with a record label, especially one of the Gothic outfits like Projekt or Cleopatra. Mark was the lead singer of the local Goth band, December's Darkness.

"No? Then you tell me." Mark sat back taking a sip of his coffee. He set the cup down, and nervously toyed with the silver cross around his neck. In the center of the cross was a bright, blue glass eyeball.

Rick felt like it was looking right at him.

"I was reading about this manuscript in a book of esoterica. It seems that this monk..."

"A monk, huh?" Mark smiled knowingly.

"Yeah, a monk, about nine hundred years ago... now let me finish... composed this particular piece of music. He lived in an abbey somewhere on the eastern coast of England. Anyway, it was burned down by the Vikings on one of their frequent raids. You know, slaughtered the monks, stole the candlesticks and jeweled chalices, that sort of thing."

"So what does that have to do with alternative music?" Rick asked impatiently. "Cut to the chase, man."

"Well, some archaeologists digging around in the ruins about a hundred years ago found this manuscript hidden in a secret vault under the abbey floor. There were some other manuscripts, too. This piece was composed by a Brother Cedric..."

"To summon angels?" asked Mark. He snickered. "I thought that's what they prayed for."

"You're hopeless," said Rick.

"So what are you gonna do with this?"

"I've been working in my home studio experimenting with some of that ethereal stuff."

"I was right, like Dead Can Dance." He smiled cynically. "That gutless, airy crap."

"We all can't be Pittsburgh's answer to Rozz Williams," Rick said, frowning. "Some of us don't even want to be." After a short pause he went on. "So, I've been recording some keyboard stuff on my four track, and I thought it'd be cool to lay down some *real* ancient music, not just music that sounds ancient."

Mark nodded his head. "Interesting," he said, sounding very disinterested. Then his eyes lit up. "Did I tell you about the bootleg tape I got in the mail last week? It's from Shadow Project's last tour..."

It was a little after two a.m. Rick's eyes were blurring as he listened to the playback for the fourth time. Earlier in the evening, he'd laid down a melody line using a setting on his digital keyboard that gave the sound of a pipe organ as heard from the outside of a cathedral. On

the second track, he'd recorded rhythm chords using a twelve string lute that he'd borrowed from a friend who worked the Renaissance Faire circuit. These he ping-ponged over to a third track, adding some deep bass organ pedals in the process.

Rick looked down at his sketch pad, where he had mapped out the plan for his recording of *The Summoning of Angels*.

What this thing needs is some chanting, or maybe a choir effect. Maybe I can get Judy to overdub her voice on a couple of tracks. That would sound angelic.

Judy was the lead singer with Carnifex, a local shoegazer band. She had the perfect voice for the ethereal effect he wanted to achieve. He could overdub her voice at least three times without loss of quality, then back it up with a choral track from the digital sampler. Rick liked Judy's voice, in fact, without her, Carnifex would have folded long ago. The other musicians weren't that great.

It would be nice to do a project with Judy. With my background in medieval and Renaissance music added to her haunting vocals, we could create a sound...

Yeah, like Dead Can Dance.

He could almost hear the sneer in Mark's voice.

Not just Dance Can Dance. How about Aurora? Or Sorrow? Or Black Rose?

He listened to the playback. The organ tones echoed in his head. Rick imagined Brother Cedric seated at the pipe organ in that ancient abbey, writing his music... long before the red-handed Norsemen had swept over the land with fire and steel.

The bass pedals played a rumbling counterpoint.

On the second verse, the shimmer of the lute chords filled in behind the organ.

A travelling troubadour who enjoyed the hospitality of the monks as he passed up the coast. Sanctuary for a night against the storms that raged against the rock strewn shores.

Where are these thoughts coming from, I must be more tired than I thought. I'm not usually so poetic.

The third verse began.

That's when he heard the voices. Distant. Haunting and ethereal. Just like he'd imagined.

Angelic voices.

He hit the stop button. The voices disappeared, along with the organ and lute.

He blinked, rubbed his eyes. He felt exhausted.

Must've fallen asleep. For just a minute. Just like I did in Chemistry class that time.

That incident had been responsible for his nickname "Sleepwalker", in high school. He'd dropped off for just a few seconds. Long enough, though, to drop his pencil. He'd jerked awake, grabbed for the falling pencil, missed it, but managed to knock all his books off the desk and onto the floor. He winced at the memory.

I've been working on this too long. Must've imagined the whole thing. I'd better get to bed.

They couldn't be real. Could they?

The Summoning of Angels.

Just to prove something to himself, he pushed the play button.

Nothing. Just an overwrought imagination mixed with fatigue. I'd better hit the sack.

Rick turned off the recorder and headed for bed. That night he dreamed of angelic voices.

Brother Cedric stood alone in a moonlit grove. Great oaks reared up to starry heavens. A shiver ran up his neck. He shouldn't have come here. This grove had been sacred to the Old Ones, the dark deities worshipped on these isles long ago. Yet this is where Alcazar had instructed him to come.

Alcazar, curse his black heart.

I must be crazy to consort with a magician. I could be excommunicated. Or worse, branded a heretic and burned at the stake.

But it is for knowledge. Something those fools at the monastery would never understand.

Narrow-minded, fearful of true knowledge.

Yet, isn't that what the Serpent promised Eve?

"Ye shall be wise, like gods." The words echoed in his mind. He felt a twinge of guilt.

No, it's not the same.

A shadowy figure stepped into the moonlight. He was wearing a dark, flowing robe adorned with mystical signs. A long beard cascaded

over his chest, and his gray hair hung to his shoulders. Strange lights played in his eyes. Alcazar.

"I have the manuscript, priest," the magician said. "Here's your key to the world beyond. *The Summoning of Angels*."

He handed the scrap of worn vellum to the monk, who held it in the dim illumination of the autumn moon. His eyes narrowed as he scrutinized the figures inscribed thereon.

"Why, it's in musical notation," he said, looking up, amazement in his voice.

"It was the chant of the priests who lived here long ago, before Saxon, Roman, Celt, or Pict ever walked these islands. Ancient beyond belief."

"A Druid chant?"

"Long before the Druids. Their religion was a pitiful shadow of that which went before." The wizard smiled sardonically. "This has been handed down from generation to generation, age to age. Finally, it fell into the hands of one of my Brotherhood."

"What do you know of its use?" the monk asked.

"The chant must be sung seven times. On the third repetition, the angels announce their presence by their singing. It is said that they blend their voices with that of the chanter. Have you never wondered how the voices of angels sound? "

"The voices of angels... " There was awe in Cedric's voice.

"And on the seventh repetition, the angels appear, " Alcazar droned on. "If you break the chant for any reason, you must start again."

"And what happens when the angels appear?" asked the monk.

The magician shrugged. "I don't know. I never had any particular desire to either hear or see angels. My studies lie in other, darker realms."

Cedric didn't care to hear about those studies. He was already treading dangerous ground.

"I must be off," he said, "before I'm missed. The price? You never mentioned the price."

"Oh, didn't I? " An amused look passed over the magician's face.

"I think thirty pieces of silver would be adequate."

Rick woke up with a troubled mind. He knew he'd dreamed something, but he couldn't recall the contents of the dream. The whole thing was a cloudy recollection on the edge of his consciousness. As he dressed, he thought he could almost remember, but then it was gone again.

An overworked imagination. He thought of last night's playback and the mysterious voices that were first there, then not there.

Maybe a flashback. He'd done his share of psychedelics back in high school. *But I never heard of aural flashbacks. Visual, yes, but not sounds.*

He made himself a cup of instant coffee and sat down before the Tascam tape deck. He backed it up to the beginning of the third verse and hit the playback switch.

Nothing that shouldn't have been there. Just organ, lute and pedals. No voices.

He glanced back at this notebook.

Hmmm, just six verses. But isn't it supposed to have seven? Wait a minute. Who said it was supposed to have seven? There was nothing in that book I copied about the number of verses.

When I laid down these tracks, I had no idea of how many times I should repeat it. Now I seem to "know" that it's supposed to have seven.

He glanced at the clock. Twenty after eight. He only had twelve minutes to get to the bus stop so he wouldn't be late for work. Tonight he would have to add the seventh verse.

All day at work, Rick was preoccupied. He couldn't concentrate on his job at all. It was mindless work, unloading boxes and stocking shelves, but it did pay the bills.

On the bus ride home, he mulled over his plans for the evening.

I've gotta get that seventh verse down. Maybe I'll give it the full treatment, add a couple of banks of strings mixed with the organ, back off on the lute, put it more in the background. When I do the vocal overdubs with Judy, that'll be where we give it all we've got. Make it a big finale.

Rick worked though the evening on the seventh verse, recording the pipe organ part several times, just to make sure it was perfect. As he had planned, he combined it with strings, bass viols, rumbling along with the organ pedals. When he finally finished ping-ponging the whole part

onto track three, the mix was flawless. There was no way anyone would think that he'd pasted this last verse onto the other six.

Seven verses. At last. Now to listen to the whole thing.

Rick rewound the tape and hit the playback again. When the song reached the third verse he heard them.

Angels' voices. Faint in the beginning, then building as the verse progressed. As the fourth verse began, the music and voices washed over him, filling him with a strange mixture of longing and excitement.

"They are angels' voices," he mumbled aloud. "They're beautiful."

Rick sat entranced, listening to the angelic voices, caught up in the ethereal music pouring through the headphones. It was the most beautiful he'd ever heard. It surpassed anything the critics had labelled "ethereal".

"*The Summoning of Angels*," he said. "That's what this is. Not merely a piece of music... something more, some magic whereby angels are summoned into our presence."

The seventh verse began.

And the very fabric of the universe seemed to sunder before him. The air warped and shifted, in and out of focus. Great beings with fiery wings and glowing eyes stood in a semi-circle around him and his recording equipment.

They are not women with feathered wings.

Suddenly, Rick was afraid. Something about their smiles. Suddenly he knew.

The abbey hadn't been destroyed by Vikings. He knew that now as he gazed into the malignant glowing yellow eyes, beheld the mirthless smiles on their handsome faces.

He also knew that the monks hadn't hidden the manuscript under the floor for safe keeping. They had tried to keep it away from the domain of men forever, so no one might ever again summon *these* angels.

Rick screamed as his apartment erupted into flame. His tape deck exploded. A hellish maniacal laughter broke out, and the stench of brimstone filled his nostrils. One thought, only one, before he too burst into flame and died.

Fallen angels.

MORPHIA by Trio Nocturna *** self released cassette

Occasionally, one comes across that rare recording that shines in one's collection like a smoky gem, an artifact from some mythical time. Such was my reaction upon listening to Trio Nocturna's debut recording. It struck a familiar chord (ancestral memory, perhaps?) somewhere in my psyche like only a handful of other recordings have done over the years - the first King Crimson LP, Fairport Convention's LEIGE AND LIEF, the Pentangle... to name a few; a modern mixing with archaic themes in a flawless presentation.

This group, from Atlanta, Georgia, create a haunting tapestry that hearkens back to the mystic ages of antiquity. Celtic harp, keyboards, and female vocals lead us into the kingdom of Morphia. Drawing from such lyric sources as Thomas Hardy and Johann Goethe, as well as penning the remaining five songs themselves, the Trio gives us such titles as "Dream of a Dead King", "Margarella's Room", "Verse for December", and "Veil of Morpheus" (my own particular favorite).

This self-produced effort is an ambient masterpiece. If your tastes run to the medieval, or to ethereal music, then rush 8 bucks to Box 52580, Atlanta, GA 30355. Make checks payable to : Mark Breger. It's the best investment for the money that I know.



Chuck Owston

Surrounded by darkness
Buried alive
I hear my loved ones above me
Mourning my passing
Why can't they hear me
"I'm not dead", I cry
No reply.
I pound and scratch on the walls
Of this glorified box
Still, no one hears
Suddenly I'm overcome by
A cold chill and blinding light
I hear a strange voice,
"Take my hand, I'll take you away
From this wretched place"
"Who are you!" I cried
"I am the angel Azrael"
I reach out my hand,
Take my last breath,
I am gone

Sean Butler

Underflowers

UNDERFLOWERS *** self-released cassette

Hypnotic...ethereal...ambient...

Yes, all of the above are to be found on this fine offering by Pittsburgh's own Underflowers. Fronted by wraith-like Mia Chesla, this band weaves ghostly tones of violin with shimmering acoustic and electric guitars around her vocals. J. Orazi also adds his voice to the mix on several tunes. "A Psalm To The Sun" is reminiscent of the hymns to Aton written by the Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaton. You can almost visualize a priestess singing this song in the temple at Amarna.

If Projekt, 4 AD, Hyperlum, or another of the ambient labels do not sign these folks, they're missing the boat. Underflowers is right up there with the current crop of artists.

In person, the band shimmers their way through the tunes as if enveloped in multi-colored crystal. The effect is enhanced by an ingenious light show. In concert I particularly enjoyed an instrumental featuring Mia on flute and Tanya Kavalkavich on violin. It was one of the high points of their recent show at Skibo Hall at CMU.

Their tape can be ordered from David Wallace, 351 S. Fairmount Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15232.

Chuck Owston



Lorena McKennitt -- THE MASK AND MIRROR
Warner Brothers

After the success of her U.S. debut THE VISIT, fans of McKennitt's music have eagerly awaited her next offering of the Celtic, the medieval, and the mysterious. In the first song, she takes us into a Spanish monastery for "The Mystic's Dream", where her beautiful voice is joined by Gregorian chanting. "The Bonny Swans" moves us across the waters to Ireland. This is a great album - if you love the sound of a female voice, seeming to echo out of some lost and ancient time, with cello weaving around the harp and guitars, this is a CD for you. My personal favorite is "The Dark Night of the Soul", written by St. John of the Cross. This collection comes with a nifty parchment booklet with the lyrics and McKennitt's personal observations on distant places and times.

To think this gem came from Warner Brothers, the folks who also gave us THE BIG SLEEP, CASABLANCA, Bugs Bunny, and "That's All Folks!".



THE MASK

CAMILLA: You sir, should unmask.

STRANGER: Indeed?

CASSILDA: Indeed it's time. We all have laid aside disguise but you.

STRANGER: I wear no mask.

CAMILLA: (Terrified, aside to Cassilda.) No mask?
No mask!

THE KING IN YELLOW: Act I—Scene 2.



*model: Sheila photo: Chuck Owston
12 Century arch. Owston Ferry. Lincolnshire*



model: Debbie photo: Chuck Owston

VAMPIRES

Here are three vampire novels and one collection that are well worth your time and energy. All four are rather obscure, but nonetheless excellent. If your exposure to vampires has been limited to Bram Stoker's DRACULA and the novels of Anne Rice, then I suggest you check these out. It's time to broaden those Dark Horizons.

THE STRESS OF HER REGARD by Tim Powers, published by Ace Books.

Powers weaves such diverse elements as the Classical Muses, weird crystals from the Alps, the Biblical Nephilim, and the Greek lamiae, into a tale starring the English Romantic poets, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. It's an eerie odyssey. Perhaps it's the strangest story of vampirism and possession you're ever likely to read. This is the thinking person's vampire tale. When you finish it, you are ready to go back and read it again, to catch all you might have missed. The poets become real people, not some guys you had to read about in High School Lit class. They become more than names on a page.

After reading this book, I wanted to read more of the poetry of Byron, Shelley, and Keats... you know, they wrote a good bit about the supernatural. Just maybe...

THE MAKING OF A MONSTER by Gail Petersen, published by Dell/Abyss.

On the cover, there's a blurb that says, "Impressive...Better than Anne Rice!". This is about a woman who is seduced into vampirism by a mysterious man in black... sound familiar? It's not. She joins a rock and roll band... sound familiar? It's not. I mentioned this to someone recently, and their reply was, "Anne Rice already did that with Lestat." Not really. In the Rice biography, PRISM OF THE NIGHT, it says that Anne prepared for Lestat's rock career by attending a concert by the group (?) that travelled with Iron Maiden (such a famous band that the author didn't know who they were) and a concert of the Bee Gees (the BEE GEES? give me a break).

Gail Petersen performed New Wave/Alternative Music with her group The Catholic Girls for crowds up to 30,000, sharing the stage with the likes of the Ramones and the Kinks. Her character comes across as authentic. Gail Petersen knows what rock music's like from the inside... she's done it, and it shows in this book. Forget your preconceived notions... read about it from one who's been there.

THOSE WHO HUNT THE NIGHT by Barbara Hambly, published by Del Rey Books.

Somebody's killing the vampires of London. Systematically hunting them down and exposing them to the destroying sunlight. James Asher, who has

given all to Queen and Country in the foreign service (as a spy and an assassin), is approached by the remaining vampires to hunt down the killer. What if he refuses? "We have your wife...". An atmospheric thriller by gaslight... set in Victorian England... you know, the time of such notable characters as Sherlock Holmes, Jack the Ripper, and , yes, even Count Dracula.

VAMPS edited by Martin H. Greenburg and Charles G. Waugh, published by DAW Books.

The blurb on the cover says it all: Heart freezing tales of those deadly Ladies of the Night... Vampires." With a great cover by Jill Bauman Versandi (this cover gal would be a welcome addition to any Gothfest), it hints at the mysterious ladies within. This book came out in 1987, but it's well worth the effort to find it. VAMPS contains great stories ranging from LeFanu's classic "Camilla" to Derleth's "The Drifting Snow", the tale of a snow vampire. Manly Wade Wellman, that master of the American folklore/horror tale, gives us two offerings. Sixteen tales here in all, a regular full course blood feast. The oldest tale is "Clarimonda" by Theodore Gautier from 1836. There's even a vampiric retelling of the Snow White fairy tale. Did you ever wonder why she had hair like ebony, skin white as snow, and lips red as blood? The story is written by British writer Tanith Lee. It sure ain't the Disney version.

The only story that seems to be missing from this collection is my own personal favorite "Revelation in Black" by Carl Jacobi. The fact that it's been anthologized many times in the past may be the reason for its exclusion.

So, check out your nearest thrift store for a copy of VAMPS.





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